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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5932
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0353
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0397
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0553
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0361
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0306

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 001275

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SUBJECT: BALLOT PRINTING PROBLEM RESOLVED, BUT PARTNERS
WON'T PAY

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 1259

Classified By: CDA Steven Koutsis, Reasons 1.4(b)(d)

(C) Summary

-- The government has selected the London company Smith and Ouzman LTD to print the ballots for the upcoming municipal and legislative elections, ending a two week-long impasse between the government, the election commission and the UN.

-- While the UN and partners are satisfied with the move, they will not pay the \$700,000 ballot printing costs due to insufficient time to follow UN tendering procedures.

-- The UN ResRep refused the government's request to reimburse the government for the balloting costs, saying that the UN steering committee would decide how to redistribute the unspent funds.

(C) Comments

-- The government's successful resolution of the impasse prevented a potential delay in the election calendar.

-- Partners hope that the government has drawn a lesson, and in the future will follow UN guidance on contracting and selection procedures.

End Summary and Comments.

11. (U) The government has selected the London company Smith and Ouzman LTD to print the ballots for the upcoming municipal and legislative elections. The company will deliver the four million ballots by November 10 at a cost of \$700,000.

12. (C) According to UN ResRep Cecile Molinier, the Secretary General of the Presidency Habib Ould Hemet asked that the UN basket fund "reimburse" the government for the ballot printing costs. Molinier, who met with Hemet on October 25, explained that this would not be possible, adding that the UN Steering Committee would decide how to reallocate the unspent funds.

¶3. (C) Molinier told Hemet that she hoped "lessons could be taken" from this experience to avoid problems in the coming steps, and she insisted that it was necessary for the government to better plan its future requests for UN assistance.

¶4. (C) According to Molinier, Hemet emphasized the capabilities of the English company, and assured her of the government's continued desire to work closely with the UN and western partners. Molinier described the meeting as "very cordial with a strong spirit of partnership."

¶5. (U) According to the government's official newspaper "Horizons," the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) and the Inter Ministerial Transition Committee have agreed to the use of the English company. The newspaper says the company has the capability to print all ballots with the required safety features to prevent forgery and fraud. According to the newspaper, the company has ballot printing experience in several countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia and Benin.
Koutsis